RICE

Teacher EDUCATION

LEARN. TEACH. LEAD.

Contemporary Issues in Education
EDUC 202 / 502 – Fall 2014
Monday 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Mechanical Laboratory 251

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Instructor: Dr. Robert Lundin
Office Hours: By Appointment
Cell Phone: (281) 865-6690
E-mail: robert.a.lundin@rice.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to this next chapter of your education studies at Rice University, and specifically to our study of Contemporary Issues in Education! In reflecting on your past experiences in the educational arena, you have no doubt witnessed many of the issues impacting schools, students, and educators. *So how can a new educator make sense of the trends that will impact their daily interactions with students, and what can educators do to prepare themselves for the rapidly changing field they will soon enter?*

Over the next fifteen weeks, we will engage in a comprehensive examination of these key questions through a combination of in-class discussions, written reflections, simulation exercises, and reading of texts. My aim is to ensure that each of you feels energized and challenged by the ongoing exchange of ideas you will be engaged in with your colleagues, and that you in turn feel confident in your ability to actively contribute to that process.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES

In order to guide our discussions, this course will be centered around five guiding questions. You will know you have mastered the course content when you are able to answer each guiding question in a detailed and thoughtful way. Your midterm and final exams will be derived exclusively from the discussions.

- ***What qualities are required today to foster a great school or classroom?***
- ***How have schools and school systems historically changed and adapted?***
- ***Who is served by today's schools, and what are the unique needs of those populations?***
- ***How are schools effectively led?***
- ***What challenges will schools and school systems face in the future?***

STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES

Texas Education Agency ***Pedagogy & Professional Responsibilities*** ***Standards for Educator Certification (EC-Grade 12)***
Standard I The teacher designs instruction appropriate for all students that reflects an understanding of relevant content and is based on continuous and appropriate assessment. *Standard II* The teacher creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport that fosters a positive climate for learning, equity, and excellence. *Standard III* The teacher promotes student learning by providing responsive instruction that makes use of effective communication techniques, instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process, and timely, high-quality feedback. *Standard IV* The teacher fulfills professional roles and responsibilities and adheres to legal and ethical requirements of the profession.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Throughout the fifteen weeks, you will be expected to read and reflect on specific sections of the course texts. Please ensure you have continuous access to the texts throughout the course.

Kids and School Reform *Wasley, Hampel, & Clark, 1997. Jossey-Bass.* *ISBN – 0-7879-1065-1*	***The Shame of the Nation*** *Kozol, 2006: Broadway Books.* ISBN - 1400052459
Teaching as Leadership *Farr, 2010. Jossey-Bass.* *ISBN - 0470432861*	***The One Best System*** *Tyack, 1974, Harvard University Press.* *ISBN – 0674637828*
Education Myths *Greene, 2005: Rowman & Littlefield* *ISBN -0742549771*	

In addition, your understanding of the concepts outlined in the texts will be supplemented by your analysis of specific articles and case studies. Each of the relevant case documents can either be downloaded directly or will be distributed in class.

COURSE FORMAT

I have designed this class to foster maximum opportunities for involvement and engagement for each of you. We will focus a significant amount of each class session on discussion of key concepts. YOUR PARTICIPATION IS BOTH VALUED AND EXPECTED! In addition, certain sessions will integrate guest speakers, video reflection, simulation activities, and group interaction.

I pride myself on being accessible to my students whenever I am needed. Thus you should always feel free to raise questions or discuss the material. As future stewards of your own classroom culture, I know you will appreciate the importance of maintaining a environment in which we are supportive of each other's contributions and ideas.

GRADING POLICIES/PROCEDURES

Throughout these fifteen weeks, you will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate your mastery of the course concepts. The ultimate grade you earn will be based on these products. I have no hidden agenda in relation to grades, and am eager for all students to receive the highest grades possible provided they meet these basic requirements. ☺

5 ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENTS	25 points
5 DISCUSSION GROUP SUBMISSIONS	25 points
1 RESEARCH PAPER & PRESENTATION	20 points
MID-TERM EXAMINATION	15 points
FINAL EXAMINATION	15 points

The style required for papers is that of the American Psychological Association (APA).

GRADE	**GRADE POINTS**	**NUMERIC RANGE**
A+	4.33	97-100
A	4.0	93-96
A-	3.66	90-92
B+	3.33	87-89
B	3.0	83-86
B-	2.66	80-82
C+	2.33	77-79
C	2.0	73-76
C-	1.66	70-72
D+	1.33	67-69
D	1.0	63-66
D-	0.66	60-62
F	0.0	Below 60

COURSE SCHEDULE

Over the course of the semester, we will delve deeply into multiple facets of the issues impacting schools, students, educators, and communities. Though the outline below offers you a road map for what we will cover, we may alter it slightly based on our ongoing progress. In addition, I reserve the right to add or remove readings based on the needs of the group. The tentative schedule is as follows:

Week	Date	Discussion Topics	Following this class, you should …
1	Mon., Aug. 25th	Introduction to the U.S. Education Context What are the big questions impacting students, schools, and communities?	Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • "*A Nation at Risk"* • *"Goals 2000"* • *"Should America Be More Like Them?"* • *"Too Little Too Late"* • *"How The World's Best Performing School Systems Come Out On Top"* By September 5th, submit a two-page reflection justifying whether the findings outlined in "A Nation At Risk" and "Goals 2000" in retrospect seem appropriate, overly aspirational, or not ambitious enough AND explain why.
2	Mon., Sep. 1st	**LABOR DAY**	
3	Mon., Sep. 8th	How are we performing as a nation? How do our schools compare to those in other nations? What lessons can we learn from other contexts?	Read the following texts: • Kozol • "What No School Can Do" (available on OwlSpace) • "American Schooling & Educational Inequality: A Forecast For The 21st Century" (available on OwlSpace) Watch *Dropout Nation.* (available on OwlSpace) By September 12th, respond to the online discussion prompts.

4	Mon., Sep. 15th	What are the relationships between the structure of school systems and student achievement? How do issues of race and income impact equity in educational outcomes? *"Waiting for Superman"*	Read selected excerpts of the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *Children at Risk* • *Houston Area Survey* By September 20th, submit a two-page reflection describing what you feel are the most pressing issues for Houston's kids.
5	Mon., Sep. 22nd	Within the fourth largest city in America, how are our schools performing? How do those results impact Houston's residents and communities as a whole? *GUEST SPEAKER:* *Dr. Stephen Klineberg*	Read Tyack.
6	Mon., Sep. 29th	How have the structure and focus of schools historically changed? What subsequent impacts have those changes exerted on student achievement?	Watch the following videos: (available on OwlSpace) • *Kopp and Ravitch: What Does Real Reform Require?* • *"The N.Y. Charter School Debate"* Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *"The Embattled Teacher"* Read selected excerpts of the following text (available on OwlSpace): • *"Rhetoric Versus Reality: What We Know and What We Need to Know About Vouchers and Charter Schools"* By October 3rd, respond to the online discussion prompts.

7	Mon., Oct. 6th	How has the American education system adapted to changing demands? How has the introduction of school choice (charter schools, magnet/vanguard, vouchers) impacted school and student performance on the macro and micro levels? How have school systems' recent attempts to attract new human capital into the teaching profession worked? *GUEST SPEAKER:* *Mr. Charles Glover*	Read McAdams and HISD overview documents. (distributed in class) By October 12th, respond to the online discussion prompts.
H.I.S.D. Board Meeting [5:00 p.m.]			
8	Mon., Oct. 13th	**MIDTERM RECESS**	Read Greene. By October 19th, submit a two-page reflection responding to the following prompt: The question of 'Does money matter?' gets thrown around frequently in the education arena. Based on your experiences within urban schools, under what circumstances are financial resources the determinant of the success or failure of the school/student? When are factors other than money the key to transforming the educational experiences of students?

9	Mon., Oct. 20th	How can the performance of schools be improved? How can schools adjust to the ever-increasing demands on their resources? What elements are most important? • Financial Resources • Human Capital • Community Transformation • Leadership *GUEST SPEAKER:* Dr. James Guthrie	Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *Brown v. Board of Education* • *Special Education & ELL Overview* • *"The Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools"* (available on OwlSpace) • *"Seven Strong Claims About Successful School Leadership"* (available on OwlSpace) By October 24th, submit a two-page reflection sharing your observations on how you have seen the needs of specialized student populations served (or not served) in the course of your school observations.
10	Mon., Oct. 27th	Who is served by today's schools, and what are their unique needs? • Limited English Proficiency Students • Special Education Students • Gifted & Talented Students • Diverse Learners • At-Risk Youth What are the implications of these student populations on teachers, schools, and school systems? What are the tenets of highly effective schools? What do today's students need from their school environments? *GUEST SPEAKER:* *Dr. Bob Sanborn*	Read the following texts: • Farr • *"Teaching Effectiveness: Expanding The Solution"* (available on OwlSpace) • *"The Irreplaceables" Executive Summary* • *"America's Teacher-Training Programs Aren't Good Enough"* • *"The Widget Effect"* Using the "Teaching As Leadership" rubric, analyze one of the teachers you have observed in a two-page written reflection.

11	Mon., Nov. 3rd	What qualities must today's teachers demonstrate to ensure effectiveness? How can novice educators be optimally prepared to be successful? How can the teaching profession retain quality educators? How should educators be accurately evaluated?	Read the following texts: (available on OwlSpace) • *Danielson Teacher Observation Rubrics* • *Marzano School Leadership Rubrics* • *"Teaching As Leadership" Rubric* • *"Rating a Teacher Observation Tool"*
12	Mon., Nov. 10th	Classroom Observation Reflections	
13	Mon., Nov. 17th	Issue Presentations	
SUBMIT RESEARCH PAPERS BY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21st AT 6 P.M.			
14	Mon., Nov. 24th	Issue Presentations	
15	Mon., Dec. 1st	Issue Presentations	
SUBMIT FINAL EXAM BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21ST AT 6 P.M.			

ASSIGNMENT GUIDELINES

RESEARCH PAPER

Over the course of this semester, you will identify a wide range of pressing issues impacting kids, schools, and communities. Though it is impossible to fully address all of these issues in a one-semester class, I would like for each of you to become experts on the specific challenges related to one of these issues.

You will be asked to select one specific issue impacting American schools. Some potential topics could include (but are not restricted to):

Accountability
Achievement Gap
Adequate Yearly Progress
After-School Programs
Alternative Teacher Certification
Assessment
Character Education
Charter Schools
Choice
Class Size
College Access
Comprehensive School Reform
Desegregation
Distance Learning
Dropouts
English-Language Learners
High School Reform
Home Schooling
Low-Performing Schools
Parent Involvement
Prekindergarten
Privatization of Public Education
Professional Development
Reading
Religion in Schools
Rural Education
School Construction
School Finance
School-to-Work
Social Promotion
Special Education
Standards
Student Health
Student Mobility
Teacher Quality
Technology in Education
Title I
Tracking
Violence and Safety
Vouchers
Year-Round Schooling

You may select any topic you wish; however, it can not simply be an extended analysis of any of the individual topics we discussed in class. You will then thoroughly review the research on this topic, and prepare a paper that summarizes both the current findings on your issue as well as your ideas for potential solutions. Your paper should be a minimum of 15 pages in proper APA format.

You will be expected to submit a one-paragraph topic proposal to me no later than Tuesday, November 5th. (You should of course feel free to do so earlier whenever you are so inspired!)

Your final papers will be due by Friday, November 22nd . You will then have the opportunity to facilitate a 15-20 minute discussion on your topic to the class. I will share further details on the presentations as the deadline draws nearer.

Your combined paper and presentation is worth 20 points.

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENTS

Reflection assignments offer me the opportunity to witness your application of key course concepts. These essays should be written in academic language, though I understand if certain topics tend to lend themselves more to a first-person narrative. APA formatting should be used for citations.

Reflections should be a MINIMUM of two pages in Times New Roman 12-pt. font. If you choose to write more than that, I'll be pleased. I'll be even happier if I see you using your reflections to begin formulating questions for the upcoming class discussion.

Each reflection essay is worth 5 points.

DISCUSSION BOARD SUBMISSIONS

On weeks when you are not expected to prepare a reflection assignment, you will be asked to contribute to an online discussion forum focusing on key questions for the upcoming week's session. *It is your responsibility to check the discussion board on a weekly basis for updates or additional submissions.*

My criterion for grading your submissions is simply whether you contributed meaningful insights to the discussion, rather than basing it on an arbitrary number of posts. It is in your best interests, however, to contribute frequently to the online discussions.

Each week's discussion board submissions are worth 5 points.

MIDTERM & FINAL EXAMS

Two examinations will be administered during the course. The midterm and final will be comprised exclusively of essay questions. These will be open-book/open-note tests. .

MIDTERM EXAM: No Later Than Friday, October 18th
FINAL EXAM: No Later Than Sunday, December 21st

Each of these exams are worth 15 points.

IN-SCHOOL OBSERVATION

Finally, you will be expected to complete at least ten hours of observation in a Houston-area middle or high school. We will be using the insights you draw from these experiences in our discussions.

I will share specific information with you on local campuses for which Rice has already negotiated access. You will be expected to log your observation hours, which you will submit at the end of the semester.

Please let me know if you expect any logistical challenges or require assistance in arranging access to an additional campus.

I reserve the right to deduct up to 10 points from any student who has not completed observations.

SHARING YOUR WORK

A major rationale for the design of this course is to foster an even broader sharing of your knowledge and expertise among your classmates. For that reason, many of the assignments have been designed to serve not only as a valuable learning experience for yourself but also as a catalyst for group dialogue (e.g. analyses, reflection essays). I deeply value and appreciate your continued commitment to sharing your work with your peers, and will ask that you also show this same appreciation and respect to others as they too share their insights with you. You may also rest assured that any grades accrued on these assignments will remain strictly confidential.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Students who have special needs addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need any test or course material accommodations should feel free to request assistance through Rice's Disability Support Services at (713) 348-5841 or at adarice@rice.edu.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The university system is based on a respect of intellectual property. Citing sources of information used in one's work and total reliance on personal ability in individual assessments are fundamentals in scholarly behavior. Breaches in academic integrity will be documented and reported to the Honor Council. The instructor has the right to fail the student for the specific project or for the entire course.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

It is the instructor's policy that late assignments will not be accepted. Exceptions to this policy are only allowed due to individual extenuating circumstances and will be at the discretion of the instructor to accept a late assignment and to make appropriate point deductions for lateness.

ATTENDANCE

Attainment of the objectives of this course is directly related to the developmental sequences of experiences from one class meeting to another; thus, frequent absences from class makes it unlikely that a grade of A could be earned. Students will be expected to attend all classes and be punctual. If you come late because of traffic or other reasons, please come in and make sure you get the handout/s, activities, etc.

As busy individuals, there may be a time when you cannot be in class. In this case, please let the instructor know in advance. **One class may be missed for a valid reason with permission**. You are responsible for the content and assignments that are missed.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Often, students enter a course thinking that they can take an "Incomplete" (INC) grade if they decide they will not complete the course requirements on time. Please keep in mind that students will not be allowed to take a grade of INC in this course due to poor planning on their part.

As your instructor, I am required to report this designation to the Office of the Registrar when a student fails to complete a course because of verified illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control that occur during the semester. If you find you do have a legitimate reason for the INC grade, please talk to me as soon as possible to discuss the situation and to identify the documentation that will be required to support your request. For additional information please refer to http://registrar.rice.edu/facstaff/grade_info/.

INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY

Sample text: All students will be expected to be proficient with a word processing system and using internet for literature review searches. In addition, all students are required to:
(1) communicate by email
(2) complete assignments using a word processing program
(3) submit assignments to the instructor by email
(4) use the library's electronic databases for literature reviews
(5) utilize a class discussion board for ongoing questions, discussions and student concerns.

Thank you for all that you will do for Houston's kids, and for committing to advancing your own professional skills through your education studies! I look forward to a great semester!